

OPENING STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE VERNON J. EHLERS
CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND STANDARDS
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Hearing on Improving Drought Monitoring and Forecasting: H.R. 5136, the National
Integrated Drought Information System Act of 2006**

May 4, 2006

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

2318 Rayburn House Office Building

Good morning. Welcome to today's hearing on improving drought monitoring and forecasting. We have an excellent panel today to help us better understand drought and its impacts on society – and most importantly – what we can do to better prepare for and reduce those impacts. Drought is a pernicious disaster; it can creep up on you in the form of pleasantly cloudless days, but once it has arrived it can destroy livelihoods, damage valuable ecosystems, and even threaten human health. NOAA estimates that we lose around 7 billion dollars each year to this slowly emergent, but devastating natural disaster. Since we cannot manufacture more water, our best defense against this creeping threat is knowledge. We must provide clear and accurate warnings of coming droughts so that we can seek appropriate solutions and take preventive actions, such as increased water conservation. Drought information should include enough details to make it useful to the people who work so hard to manage water resources and minimize the effects of drought on our daily lives. The National Integrated Drought Information System Act seeks to provide just that kind of information.

I am glad that my colleagues, Ralph Hall and Mark Udall, have brought this issue to our attention with their bill. I am pleased to welcome Mr. Hall to join our subcommittee today and recognize him for a brief statement.